

REMARKS

Claims 1-21 are pending in the application.

Claims 1-21 stand rejected.

Claims 1, 12 and 21 have been amended.

Rejections Under § 102(b) and § 103(a)

In the Final Office Action, dated August 12, 2005, claims 1-10, 12, and 16-21 stood rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by F. S. Hillier and G. J. Lieberman, *Introduction to Operations Research*, 6th ed., McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1995 ("*Hillier*"). Claims 11 and 13-15 stood rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Hillier*. These rejections were reiterated in the Advisory Action dated December 2, 2005.

Applicants wish to thank the Examiner for her diligence and insightful comments in the Advisory Action dated December 2, 2005. In response thereto, Applicants have amended independent claims 1, 12 and 21 in accord with the Examiner's comments therein. Applicants, in light of these amendments, reiterate their position, as presented in their response to the Final Office Action, dated August 12, 2005 (said response dated August 18, 2005).

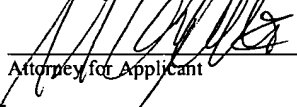
In light of the amendments presented herein, and the arguments presented in Applicants' response dated August 18, 2005, which apply with equal force hereto, Applicants respectfully submit that amended independent claims 1, 12 and 21 are allowable, for at least the reasons stated therein. Moreover, Applicants respectfully assert that claims 2-11 and 13-20, which

depend variously from independent claims 1, 12 and 21, are also allowable, for at least the foregoing reasons.

CONCLUSION

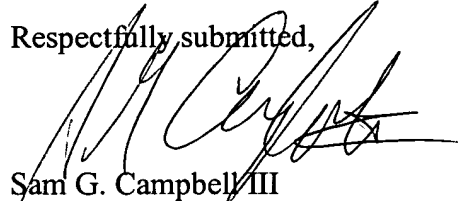
In view of the amendments and remarks set forth herein, the application is believed to be in condition for allowance and a notice to that effect is solicited. Nonetheless, should any issues remain that might be subject to resolution through a telephonic interview, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned.

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as First Class Mail in an envelope addressed to: Mail Stop RCE, Commissioner for Patents, P. O. Box 1450, Alexandria, Virginia, 22313-1450, on December 12, 2005.


Attorney for Applicant

12/12/05
Date of Signature

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